

February 27, 2023

Co-Chair Rick Lopes
Co-Chair Joseph Gresko
Senator Stephen Harding
Representative Patrick Callahan

Members of the Environment Committee:

I work in the energy industry and I want to share with you a number of concerns I have about SB 979.

Section 4(c) would allow municipalities to adopt their own building codes based on emissions, which is basically a ban on traditional fuels and heating equipment. Policymakers should heed the reaction by the public after the US Consumer Product Safety Commission announced the potential banning of gas cooking stoves which was met with outrage and ridicule. Section 4(c) of SB 979 would likely elicit the same backlash as the state would be taking away fuels like propane, natural gas, and renewable biodiesel/Bioheat fuel. Not to mention the chaos this would as 169 towns could have entirely different building codes.

Section 5 of the bill amends current law to require continuing education for licensed HVAC technicians who already have knowledge and experience with all types of heating systems including electric heat pumps. Individuals who have obtained a heating and cooling trade license are already required to have over 8,000 hours of training before they can become a journeyman. This mandate to get additional training is entirely unnecessary and an affront to the hard working men in women in the trade.

I am also concerned about language in section 2 of the bill that would allow the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to create a "Connecticut home energy label". Allowing DEEP to create boutique standards that only apply to Connecticut, that departs from national standards, will not serve the public and we ask that this language be removed from the bill.

Energy consumption is a result of several different drivers - the efficiency of the heating/cooling system, home performance (ie. weatherization), weather, and the behavior of the occupants.

Above all, the behavior of the occupants of the dwelling will determine energy consumption. For example, a family of five where the parents are at work and the children are at school, would have used much less energy in 2019 than they did in 2020 during the pandemic, when they worked from home and went to school online because of COVID. Energy usage data shows more about how the prior owner used energy in the home, than it does about the home itself.

Creating a home energy label for residences and rental units to determine the cost of energy (heating, cooling, lighting) usage that would mislead consumers and potentially devalue dwellings.

My company, Hocon Gas has reliably served the public with clean burning propane gas for over 70 years. We operate 6 locations throughout our state and employ some 135 people. Although I feel the Connecticut legislative bodies mean well and most distributors in our industry realize climate change is real, statistics released by the Federal EIA reveal that Connecticut consumes something in the order of 1.3% of the energy produced in America and propane currently generates fewer carbon emissions than grid electricity and once renewable propane which is already being produced from one plant in Louisiana and two in California becomes more widely produced, its carbon intensity is less than zero. It doesn't make sense to eliminate an energy source with such existing benefits and an even brighter future.

I ask that you oppose SB 979.

Sincerely,

David Gable
President
Hocon Gas

With operations in Norwalk, Guilford, Waterbury, Danbury, Torrington and Suffield